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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 26 July 1994, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. BUTLER (Australia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS (continued) (A/49/104-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, E/1994/50 and Add.1 and 2, E/1994/51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 61 and 81)

Mr. AWAAD (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the international community must strengthen its efforts to achieve the goals set by the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. In that connection, increased support should be given to the Economic Commission for Africa. The worsening economic and social situation in Africa was closely tied to the failure to implement the Agenda. Although a mid-term review was scheduled for 1995, the Group of States tended to believe that, given the woeful progress achieved so far, the New Agenda for the Development of Africa would suffer the same fate as the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, which had been a failure. The Council should therefore adopt the draft resolutions, decisions and recommendations presented by the Economic Commission for Africa in its report.

Mr. SYCHOU (Belarus) said that his delegation supported the decisions of the forty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), in particular the request by ECE that, in addition to the 10 posts for regional advisers, it should be given adequate human and financial resources, taking into account its areas of competence. His delegation felt that it was very important to support the Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition so as to ensure their full participation in the ECE programme of workshops and in meetings of ECE subsidiary bodies. It attached great importance to the recommendation adopted at the Commission's forty-eighth session that ECE should be the focal point for coordinating the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/181.

The Republic of Belarus would participate actively in the regional conference on transport and the environment in 1996. His delegation noted with satisfaction, in paragraph 84 of the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/50) that assistance to countries in transition had become a guiding principle of the Commission. It also welcomed the continuing process of adaptation of structures and programmes under way in ECE in response to the changing realities in the region, taking into account its comparative advantages. It commended the efforts of ECE to minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

His delegation believed that coordination of the work of the regional commissions and global subdivisions of the United Nations should be discussed at a subsequent session of the Council, in the context of operational activities for development. It would be very useful to learn of the problems encountered by regional commissions in their relations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

(Mr. Sychou, Belarus)

The proposal for interregional cooperation in studying the impact of international migration in countries of destination and countries of origin was of great interest.

Mr. DUGAN (United States of America) said that while his delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/1994/50), it was deeply concerned at its late submission, especially since it contained draft decisions and resolutions for immediate action by the Council. In that connection, an initiative was under way to address the late submission of documents at the current session. By definition, the regional commissions were not universal and it was very important to have an overview of their work. Coordination among the regional commissions and between their activities and those of the rest of the United Nations development system, particularly in the operational sphere, must be analysed and encouraged.

Concerning the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), his delegation welcomed efforts to strengthen inter-agency cooperation at the regional level and the establishment of a regional inter-agency committee for Asia and the Pacific. He welcomed the remark by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) that the primary feature of the Commission's programme of work should be its relevance. Concerning the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), as it had concentrated its work on the problem of integration with eastern Europe, he wondered what initiatives had been taken regarding the establishment of an ECE office in eastern Europe. He welcomed the statement by the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on how that Commission was modifying its programme of work in response to both relevant General Assembly resolutions and recent development on the international scene. He agreed with the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) that the regional dimension was too often overlooked and welcomed his observations on promoting interregional cooperation.

Mr. CUI Tiankai (China) said that he agreed with the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. Turning to the ESCAP region, he noted that the fiftieth session of ESCAP, held in New Delhi, had been highly successful and had culminated in the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration on strengthening Regional Economic Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific towards the Twenty-first Century and the draft action plan on infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific. He hoped that ESCAP would continue to promote increase through economic cooperation, mutuel investment and trade

(Mr. Cui Tiankai, China)

within the region and that economic cooperation with other regions of the world would likewise be based on openness and non-discrimination. Insufficient infrastructure was a major bottleneck in the region and China supported the Commission's efforts to promote cooperation in that regard. As the external economic environment considerably influenced economic development, countries in the ESCAP region were concerned at the linkage of social policies with international trade.

Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific (E/1994/61), while ESCAP, the relevant organizations and some donor countries had done much to implement the programmes of the Decade, there was a need to strengthen support for the Decade in order to bring it to a successful conclusion. Although his delegation had no objection to the amendment of ESCAP terms of reference proposed by the Secretary-General in document E/1994/81, it felt it would have been more appropriate and more in keeping the rules procedure to have sought the views of members and associate members beforehand and for ESCAP to have submitted the amendment to the Council.

Mr. von KIENLIN (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, noted that the reports submitted by the regional commissions provided a good overview of the progress made in the various regions and of the difficulties and differences they were facing. However, the late submission of the combined report had made it difficult for delegations to consult on a number of the draft resolutions recommended for adoption. As the European Union had difficulties with a number of resolutions, especially those concerning Africa because of their considerable financial implications, it would not be possible for it to take action on them at the current meeting.

Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) said that the summary of the survey of economic conditions in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1993 (E/1994/53) was sound, especially as far as Costa Rica was concerned. Since July 1993, ECLAC had published several relevant and valuable multidisciplinary studies, including "Latin America and the Caribbean: policies to improve linkages with the global economy", "Open regionalism in Latin America and the Caribbean: economic integration as a contribution to changing production patterns with social equity" and "The Social Summit: a view from Latin America and the Caribbean". At its twenty-fifth session held at Cartagena, Colombia, the Commission had addressed several pertinent issues, including regional economic integration and a regional approach to the World Summit for Social Development. It had also adopted a Regional Plan of action on Population and Development.

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

Turning to procedural issues, it was very important that the current process of restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields should give greater attention to the usefulness of a regional, multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach. Her Government hoped that the Council would approve the holding of the twenty-sixth session of ECLAC in San José, Costa Rica, in 1996, as recommended by the Commission.

Mr. AL-KHANDARI (Kuwait), referring to document E/1994/55 on the summary of the survey of economic and social developments in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, particularly paragraphs 6 and 8, said that his country had initiated measures for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of its economy. Kuwait had been forced to borrow on the international financial markets for the first time in its history and now had a huge budget deficit as a direct result of the Gulf crisis. The Government was rationalizing it expenditures and intended to concentrate on developing the non-oil and private sectors. It hoped substantially to reduce the budget deficit by the year 2000. He pointed out that some expenditures had not been covered in the document, and appealed for support from the international community for his country's reconstruction efforts.

Miss MONTAÑO (Observer for Bolivia) asked the Executive Secretary of ECLAC what the Commission was doing to ensure participation by the Latin American and Caribbean region in the elaboration of the proposed Agenda for Development.

Mr. PANKIN (Russian Federation) said that following its own reorganization, the Council should consider the work of the regional commissions in a somewhat different manner. His delegation agreed that there was a need to improve the coordination of regional cooperation; that concern had been expressed by the heads of the regional commissions themselves at their regular meetings. At those meetings, there should be greater transparency in providing information on the results achieved and the problems encountered, without awaiting the formal occasion of the Council's annual session.

The role of the regional commissions was expanding, especially in regions where dramatic changes were taking place. The regional commissions were more in touch with local conditions and needs and cooperated more closely with Governments. Their efforts should be enhanced through broader cooperation with other bodies of the United nations system. There should also be greater coordination of the approaches taken by regional commissions and their executive secretaries to urgent or emerging problems.

The Russian Federation, as a member of two regional commissions, noted that changes were taking place in the emphasis and work of ECE and ESCAP in

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response to changing conditions in each region. It felt that both Commissions should be able to diversify their methods of work. In the case of ECE, the expanding circle of participants, not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of territory, naturally called for greater efforts on the part of the Commission and an increase in the corresponding resource allocation. There was also a need to rationalize its work, especially in setting priorities, avoiding duplication and determining which tasks were most urgent.

ECE decision B (49), entitled "Diversification of forms and methods of the Commissions activities designed to assist countries of the region in transition to a market economy and their integration with the European and global economy", was vitally important; the Commission's approach should be extended to other regions. General Assembly resolution 48/181 gave sufficient grounds for strengthening that aspect in the context of regional cooperation.

The council should ensure that its debate on regional cooperation was directed more towards issues of ensuring decentralization, coordination and greater rationalization of work.

Mr. LOZANO (Mexico) expressed appreciation for the activities of ECLAC, especially its efforts to formulate new approaches and policy guidelines for the region aimed at achieving greater and better linkages between the Latin American and Caribbean countries and the global economy and progress in the process of transforming their economic structures and achieving greater social equity. His delegation was also grateful to the Executive Secretary of ECLAC for the support provided in consolidating the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Population and Development. It reiterated the importance attached by the region to the contribution which ECLAC was making and should make to the region's preparations for the World Summit for Social Development.

His delegation attached great importance to ECLAC resolution 541 (XXV) entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields: implications for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean". It supported the activities suggested in the resolution and noted the importance place on the regional commissions, which could play a more active role in the economic and social restructuring process.

His delegation reaffirmed its support for ECLAC and stressed the importance of strengthening ECLAC so that it could continue its efforts to help meet the new requirements of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. That could be achieved only if the Commission had the necessary financial resources to carry out its many tasks.

Mr. MALYA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation felt that issues relating to the proposed international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, had not been adequately reflected in the statement by the Executive Secretary of ECA. One aspect of the convention was the need for urgent action for African drylands; ECA should concentrate on mobilizing support for that action and also on the action to be taken in the interim period before the first conference of States parties.

Mr. BELHIMEUR (Observer for Algeria) expressed deep concern about the alarming situation on the African continent. For several years, Africa had appeared to be an object of concern by the international community. Unfortunately, that concern had been limited to lofty declaration which had not been followed by concrete measures. The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development had remained a dead letter. There were signs that the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of African in the 1990 would suffer the same fare.

The difficult negotiations on General Assembly resolution 48/214 had revealed the international community is indifference to Africa.

His delegation hoped that the measures by ECA would be taken into consideration by the Council. It also supported the recommendation to strengthen the capacities of ECA so that it could carry out its role of coordination, follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Mr. ETEFFA (Ethiopia) said that it was not clear how predictable economic diversification could be, even if resources were available, since most African subregions were affected by desertification and drought. At times, there was a tendency to view declarations, decisions and resolutions as ends in themselves, rather than as a means to concrete action. It was necessary to address the question of how to measure success, and what mechanisms were needed to translate decisions and resolutions into action, especially in view of the conflicts and political crises which diverted the attention of African countries from development to emergencies and humanitarian intervention. Since African countries did not have the means to implement all the decisions and resolutions that were adopted, it would seem that priority areas needed to be selected.

In many parts of Africa, infrastructure, institutional structures and human skills were all lacking; in that situation, it was not clear whether there were any prospects at all. He agreed that the international community should support Africa in its capacity-building efforts.

Mr. ROSENTHAL (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), responding to the representative of Bolivia, said that the ECLAC secretariat had participated in consultations on the

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preparation of the Agenda for Development. ECLAC also planned to organize some seminars at the regional or subregional level to seek comments on the text. For a long time, ECLAC had been making its own proposals for development with social equity.

Mr. YAKER (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for African), referring to the comments by the United States representative on the importance of the role of the regional commissions and of interregional cooperation, said that the United Nations regarded in particular, as an important element of the interregional dimension of international cooperation.

Because of their multidisciplinary and geographical coverage, the regional commissions, could play a greater role in both South-South and North-South cooperation.

ECA shared the concerns of all African delegations about the lack of progress in the implementation of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. It believed that it was important for the United Nations to review the situation in the African continent, drawing lessons from conflicts and their aftermath and the cost of emergency operations. ECA could not overemphasize the need to accord increased resources to Africa, particularly in view of the current international economic environment and the existence of regional economic and even political blocs. The low and declining levels of income in Africa and the very powerful economies of Europe and especially North America made it necessary for the Council to consider issues of the harmony and balance of the world economy and the equitable distribution of national income. Unfortunately, Africa was becoming increasingly marginalized. ECA believed that Africa needed a comprehensive structural adjustment which would entail mobilizing internal resources, reducing security and military costs, and ending conflicts. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution was very important in that respect and needed to be provided with the necessary resources.

A global, integrated approach was needed to the problems of African development. ECA welcomed the recent meetings of the Group of Seven, and stressed the importance of the Tokyo international Conference on African Development. It hoped that there would be follow-up in terms of coherent programmes and the necessary resources. The concept of Africa as a continent in transition, which included some very positive elements in respect of democracy, human rights and the role of civil society, was very important.

Replying to the representative of Tanzania, he said that ECA had participated actively in the negotiations on the international convention to combat decertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and

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desertification, particularly in Africa. It also attached great importance to the African instrument included within the framework of the convention and hoped that resources would be allocated by African States and the international community.

On the question raised by the representative of Ethiopia regarding capacity-building in Africa, ECA believed that human development, including the development of science and technology, in cooperation with Africa's partners was the right answer. ECA was developing a plan to that effect and hoped to establish the necessary contacts and adopt the necessary projects and programmes.

On the questions raised by the representatives of Egypt and Algeria regarding the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, he recalled that the New Agenda was one of the five main priorities in Africa. The next session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, to be held in September 1994, would have issues relating to Africa on its agenda. That would be an opportunity for the Secretariat and institutions system-wide to analyse the reports of ECA as Chairman of the inter-agency task force on the implementation of the African Agenda.

Mr. BAKJAJ (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) said that ESCWA would take into account the comments made by delegations, including those made by the representatives of Kuwait and the United States of America.

Action on draft proposals recommended by the Regional Commissions

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on the draft proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/1994/50).

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The PRESIDENT said that paragraph 1 of the report contained a draft resolution, recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, entitled "Admission of Armenia as a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific". He took it that the Council wished to adopt the draft resolution.

It was so decided.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

The PRESIDENT said that paragraph 2 of the report indicated that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean had recommended that the Council take a decision approving the convening of the twenty-sixth session of the Commission at San José, Costa Rica, in 1996. He took it that the Council wished to adopt such a decision.

It was so decided.

Economic Commission for Africa

The PRESIDENT drew attention to the five draft resolutions contained in paragraph 3 of the report.

Mr. von Kienlin (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that its members had difficulties with the text of all of the draft resolutions. In the case of those with financial implications, they wished to find language leading to a real reallocation of resources, if that was possible, or providing for the allocation of adequate resources for the programmes in question. he therefore proposed that consideration of the draft resolutions be deferred to a later meeting.

M. DUGAN (United States of America) supported the proposal.

Mr. AKPLOGAN (Benin) said it was important that the text of any proposed amendments to the draft resolutions be made available as early as possible so that they could be seen and discussed by the African States.

The proposal to defer consideration of the draft resolutions was adopted.

Economic and Social Commission for Wester Asia

The PRESIDENT drew attention to draft resolutions I and III in paragraph 8 of the report, which were procedural in nature.

Draft resolution I and III were adopted.

Amendment of the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (E/1994/81)

The draft decision contained in paragraph 7 of the Note by the Secretary-General (E/1994/81) was adopted.

Reports under agenda item 7 (E/1994/50-55, 61 and 81)

The PRESIDENT proposed that the Council take note of the reports under agenda item 7.

It was so decided.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (A/49/215-E/1994/99, E/1994/111)

Mr. STOBY (Director, Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and social Council Affairs), introducing the report of the open-ended Working Group on the Review of Arrangements for Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations (A/49/215-E/1994/99), said that the Working Group had had a very successful first session in which a wide range of non-governmental organizations had participated actively. The Working Group had had before it a detailed report by the Secretary-General. After holding inter-sessional consultations in November 1994, at which it would have before it a document to be prepared by its Chairman on updating and possibly expanding the scope of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), the Working Group would meet in the spring of 1995 to complete its report.

Mrs. LIMJUCO (Philippines), speaking in her capacity as Chairman of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, introduced the Committee's report (E/1994/111) and drew attention to the draft resolution contained in paragraph 1 of the report.

Ms. MURUGESAM (India) said that her delegation supported the Working Group's report, on the understanding that the summary by the Chairman of the Working Group would serve as guidance for the Group's next session and that the full report of the Group would be a background document for that session. While reiterating its support for wide participation by non-governmental organizations in United Nations activities, India wished to underline its strong reservations with respect of the participation of those non-governmental organizations which indulged in activities inimical to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and those whose activities threatened the peace and internal stability of Member States by promoting divisions along sectarian lines.

The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council take note of the report of the Working Group.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said he took it that the Council wished to adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 1 of the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organization.

The draft resolution was adopted.

Mr. Stoby (Director, Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) pointed out that paragraph 8 of the resolution requested the Secretary-General to disseminate as broadly as possible among the non-governmental community the report of the Working Group and the documentation for it. The Secretariat would proceed on the understanding that it must implement that request within existing resources.

Mr. FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba) said that he would like to have an assurance that the documentation would reach non-governmental organizations, particularly those in developing countries, even if it was disseminated within existing resources.

Mr. ISSA (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the States of African Group with reference to item 5 of the Council's agenda, said that in view of the recent positive events in South Africa, an effort was being made to update the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. He invited Member States to submit their proposals for the Programme of Action for the Decade.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.